

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 2521

FOR EUR: DEP. ASST. SEC. LUERS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, CSCE, CZ

SUBJECT: VISIT TO PRAGUE OF DEP ASST SEC LUERS-MFA DISCUSSION
HIGHLIGHTS

1. SUMMARY: DURING SEPT. 1-3 VISIT TO PRAGUE, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUERS HELD USEFUL TALKS AT FOREIGN MINISTRY WITH DEPUTY MINISTER JABLONSKY AND MFA SIXTH DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR ZANTOVSKY, AS WELL AS SPIRITED LUNCHEON DISCUSSION AT AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE WITH DEPUTY MINISTER TRHLIK AND POLICY PLANNING CHIEF HANDL. THIS MESSAGE (WHICH WAS NOT CLEARED BY LUERS PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE) REPORTS HIGHLIGHTS OF DISCUSSIONS, WITH PRIMARY EMPHASIS ON EXCHANGE OF VIEWS RE CURRENT US-GOC BILATERAL RELATIONS. REQUEST EUR DETERMINE DISTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD IN CONCURRENCE WITH LUERS. END SUMMARY.

2. USG FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUERS OPENED DISCUSSIONS AT BOTH FOREIGN MINISTRY AND LUNCHEON WITH AN OVERVIEW OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S FOREIGN POLICY. LUERS EMPHASIZED PRESIDENT CARTER'S DESIRE TO REFLECT TRADITIONAL AMERICAN VALUES IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. THIS DESIRE LAY BEHIND THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO LAUNCH A FORTHRIGHT DEBATE ON HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD -- WITH ATTENTION TO PROBLEMS IN U.S. INCLUDED. LUERS STRESSED THAT U.S. STATEMENTS ON HUMAN
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RIGHTS

ARE NOT DIRECTED PRIMARILY AT COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. ACKNOWLEDGING RECENT STRAINS IN US-SOVIET RELATIONS AND IN EAST-WEST DETENTE AS A WHOLE, LUERS NOTED THERE HAD NONETHELESS BEEN PROGRESS IN A NUMBER OF KEY US-SOVIET ACTIVITIES. SINCE PRESIDENT'S CHARLESTON SPEECH AND PRESIDENT BREZHNEV'S "REPLY" IN HIS RECENT TOAST TO TITO, WASHINGTON'S RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW APPEAR TO HAVE IMPROVED. U.S.

SIDE HOPES THIS TREND WILL LEAD TO ESTABLISHMENT OF A MORE BUSINESS-LIKE APPROACH TO COMMON PROBLEMS. LUERS POINTED OUT THAT CONTINUING U.S. EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH MAINLAND CHINA WOULD NOT BE AIMED AGAINST USSR OR ANY OTHER STATE, BUT WOULD PROCEED AT THEIR OWN PACE IN ACCORDANCE WITH OVERALL U.S. INTERESTS IN ASIA. REGARDING THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA, USG WOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY A LEADING, ACTIVIST ROLE IN THE SEARCH FOR VIABLE PEACE. LUERS' MFA INTERLOCUTORS EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THIS BRIEF TOUR D'HORIZON.

3. GOC VIEW OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS. DEPUTY MINISTER JABLONSKY NOTED CZECHOSLOVAKS HAVE BEEN "DISTURBED" OVER APPARENT LACK OF CONTINUITY IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. DURING LUNCHEON, DEPFONMIN TRHLIK EXPRESSED SAME CONCERN AND SPELLED OUT GOC WORRIES OVER SHIFTS IN US-SOVIET RULES OF THE GAME IN TWO KEY AREAS: (A) DISARMAMENT (ESPECIALLY SECRETARY VANCE'S NEW PROPOSALS ON SALT II IN EARLY 1977) AND (B) HUMAN RIGHTS. TRHLIK UNDERSCORED CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S KEEN INTEREST IN MATTERS AFFECTING THE SECURITY OF EUROPE OWING TO ITS LONG AND DIFFICULT HISTORY OF CONFLICT ON THE FRONTIER BETWEEN EAST AND WEST. JABLONSKY AND TRHLIK MADE CLEAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S STRONG DESIRE FOR RE-INVIGORATING EAST-WEST POLITICAL DETENTE MULTI-LATERALLY, AS IN CSCE, AND BILATERALLY AS WELL AS MOVING FORWARD TO "MILITARY DETENTE" --ON SALT AND MBFR.

4. BILATERAL ISSUES. MOST OF LUERS' DISCUSSIONS CENTERED ON US-GOC
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BILATERAL PROBLEMS. JABLONSKY REVIEWED CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S INITIATIVES IN RECENT YEARS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH HER WESTERN NEIGHBORS. HE CITED SUCCESS IN RESOLVING DIFFERENCES WITH THE FRG AND AUSTRIA--CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S WARTIME ENEMIES AND TRADITIONALLY TROUBLESOME NEIGHBOR NATIONS--YET GOC HAD BEEN UNABLE TO SETTLE KEY PROBLEMS WITH THE UNITED STATES, A WARTIME ALLY. BOTH HE AND TRHLIK EXPRESSED HOPE THAT EFFORTS WOULD BE MADE SOON TO SETTLE THE PRINCIPLE US-GOC BILATERAL PROBLEM --CLAIMS/GOLD, WHICH TRHLIK DEFINED AS "AN EMOTIONAL ISSUE"--AND HINTED THAT ITS SETTLEMENT WOULD OPEN THE WAY TO PROGRESS ON OTHER MAJOR BILATERAL QUESTIONS. JABLONSKY AND ZANTOVSKY GOT ACROSS THAT GOC WOULD MOVE TOWARD REOPENING U.S. CONGEN BRATISLAVA AND IMPLEMENTING BILATERAL CONSULAR CONVENTION, ONLY AFTER "ECONOMIC" OBSTACLES ARE REMOVED FROM OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. (WE ASSUME THIS IS REFERENCE TO ACQUISITION OF MFN AND EX/IM CREDITS AS WELL AS GOLD.)

5. TRHLIK ASKED RHETORICALLY WHAT USG HAD DONE FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN THE PAST THIRTY YEARS. AMBASSADOR BYRNE POINTED OUT THAT SINCE 1948 CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAS ALMOST CONSTANTLY ATTACKED THE UNITED STATES IN COMMUNIST PARTY CONTROLLED MEDIA AND CREATED MANY OBSTACLES TO NORMAL RELATIONS. TRHLIK THOUGHT USG ATTACKED

CZECHOSLOVAKIA MORE SHARPLY THAN IT DID THE
CZECHOSLOVAKS' "LARGE NEIGHBOR" TO THE EAST. CZECHS RESENT BEING A
"WHIPPING BOY", WHEN THEY REPRESENT NO THREAT WHATEVER TO U.S.
SECURITY OR ECONOMIC INTERESTS. TRHLIK WENT ON TO
STRESS THAT BECAUSE CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAD BEEN OCCUPIED SO LONG
BY GERMANIC PEOPLES, THEN IGNORED BY THE WEST IN 1938 AT MUNICH,
IT HAD TURNED PERFORCE TO USSR AFTER WW II FOR PEACE AND PROTECTION.
US CONGRESS SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT EXPECT CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO MAKE
DRAMATIC STEPS CRITICIZING ITS TIES WITH MOSCOW. "THIS WILL NOT
HAPPEN." LUERS REJOINED THAT WASHINGTON DOES NOT SEEK TO FOMENT
CSSR-USSR TROUBLE, BUT WILL CAREFULLY STUDY CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S
ATTITUDE AND ACTIONS TOWARD THE UNITED STATES IN FORMULUATING
AND IMPLEMENTING POLICY.

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6. MAINTAINING A DIALOGUE. BOTH JABLONSKY AND TRHLIK
MADE IT CLEAR THAT DESPITE SERIOUS CONTINUING POLITICAL STRAINS
BETWEEN U.S. AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA, IT REMAINS IMPORTANT
TO KEEP OPEN A DIALOGUE IN THE SEARCH FOR SETTLEMENT OF
LONGSTANDING PROBLEMS, THEREBY PAVING THE WAY TO STRENGTHENING
AND EXPANSION OF BILATERAL TIES.
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